
Name of Organization: Great Lakes Commission

Type of Organization: Interstate Agency or Commission

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Project Title: Opportunities for Habitat Restoration in Commercial Ports

Project Category: Habitat (Ecological) Protection and Rest

Rank by Organization (if applicable): 1

Total Funding Requested (\$): 73,783 **Project Duration:** 2 Years

Abstract:

The network of Great Lakes ports is a dynamic system with periodic and long-term changes in cargo movements and tonnage amounts. Over time, such change has resulted in waterfront acreage no longer needed for port docks, slips and related harbor infrastructure. These sites, once designed for vessel use, have potential for redevelopment and/or habitat restoration. A process is needed whereby local decisionmakers can realistically evaluate habitat creation options for these former maritime places. Where maritime or industrial activity is not a prospect, habitat restoration presents a hidden -- and very significant -- opportunity with ecological benefit. In fact, at a time when waterfront property is at a premium, the opportunity to restore such sites holds great and perhaps unprecedented potential. This project will explore such activities via case studies, and outcomes will have basinwide applicability

Geographic Areas Affected by the Project

States:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illinois	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New York
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indiana	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pennsylvania
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wisconsin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minnesota	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ohio

Lakes:

<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Erie
<input type="checkbox"/> Huron	<input type="checkbox"/> Ontario
<input type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All Lakes

Geographic Initiatives:

☐ Greater Chicago ☐ NE Ohio ☐ NW Indiana ☐ SE Michigan ☐ Lake St. Clair

Primary Affected Area of Concern: All AOCs

Other Affected Areas of Concern:

For Habitat Projects Only:

Primary Affected Biodiversity Investment Area: All BIAs

Other Affected Biodiversity Investment Areas:

Problem Statement:

The network of Great Lakes ports is a dynamic system with periodic changes in cargo movements and tonnage amounts. Long term trends in system commodity flows are reflected in a reduction in commercial tonnage at numerous ports. Docks, slips and other harbor infrastructure in such places have often been underutilized -- or entirely dormant -- for years.

As elsewhere in North America, Great Lakes communities are awakening to the possibilities in their long-neglected waterfronts. Developers vie for such locations and, increasingly, public authorities are engaged in land use planning and a need to balance uses to accommodate current and future societal preferences. Whatever the waterfront issue, the public is growing more interested in the outcome.

The ecosystem function of wetlands in the Great Lakes basin is widely recognized. Unfortunately, the loss or severe disturbance of coastal wetlands due to artificial drainage and other forms of development has been extensive. Although natural and man-induced threats exist to the approximately 300,000 acres of Great Lakes coastal wetlands that remain, the tide is beginning to turn in favor of their protection.. Mitigation measures where wetlands acreage is created to offset other specific loss is being undertaken in particular places but a Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement goal (Annex 2, item XIV) of no net loss of fish and wildlife habitat is falling short.

The growing interest in redeveloping urban waterfronts, coupled with idled port places, presents a tremendous opportunity to create and/or restore wetland habitat. Many Great Lakes port communities have rivers that run through them. These estuarine sites once had wetland environments but also provided protective areas for harbor development. The infrastructure for commercial navigation and its periodic rebuilding and maintenance including dredging, filling and various types of shoreline hardening such as rip rap and sheet piling has destroyed or disturbed many acres of habitat. This project is aimed at helping local decisionmakers evaluate options for the conversion of former port lands and adjacent waters into sites that contribute to the ecological integrity of the Great Lakes.

The goal of this demonstration project is to develop a process through which former port areas can be altered to create wetland and improved adjacent aquatic habitat. The transformation of docks, slips and related infrastructure into wetland and aquatic habitat can be done solely for ecological benefit or it can be undertaken in conjunction with other multi-use options. The project will feature a case study approach. Two port communities exhibiting substantial differences but with some issues in common, would be selected so as to provide greater applicability to the range of Great Lakes port communities. Other selection criteria would be inclusion in one or two AOCs, and connection to SOLEC-identified eco-reaches with productive wetlands and aquatic habitat and Aquatic Biodiversity Investment Areas.

Proposed Work Outcome:

Task One - During the project scoping process, a project team will design the initiative in detail, and secure the support and assistance of officials associated with the two candidate case study sites.

Task Two - Initial research will focus on the basinwide status of port area redevelopment opportunities, including number of potential sites, local initiatives to date, available planning, policy and regulatory options, and related matters. On a site-specific basis, research will also be undertaken to assess current land use of the harbor adjacent lands for each port community. An inventory of existing wetland and aquatic habitat with qualitative description will also be made. Interviews with city planning staff and port officials will be focused on port land/water area availability for future alternative use.

Task Three - An advisory group for each community will be assembled to provide the project team with full understanding of local conditions, issues and opportunities. Among others, this will include advice on the suitability of particular sites for wetland and adjacent aquatic habitat creation or restoration depending on current or historical conditions. This group will be multidisciplinary and include individuals with expertise and local responsibility in wildlife/wetlands ecology, community planning, civil engineering and landscape design. Another objective of each group will be to devise a preliminary plan for one or more sites as to what and how conversion activity could be undertaken. These plans would include the number of wetland acres to be created/restored as well as the amount of aquatic habitat to be improved. Projected costs for site-specific work would also be identified.

Task Four - Two outreach meetings will be convened locally to describe the results of the research and present specific plans to local officials. The findings and plans developed in the first two tasks will be combined in a project report for Internet and hard copy distribution. A process "blueprint" will be included in the report to be used as a template for potential wetlands creation/restoration work elsewhere in the basin.

Project Milestones:

Dates:

Project Start	10/2000
Complete Task One	01/2001
Complete Task Two	06/2001
Complete Task Three	12/2001
Complete Task Four	06/2002
Preparation of Final Report	08/2002
Dissemination	09/2002
Project End	09/2002

☒ Project Addresses Environmental Justice

If So, Description of How:

Environmental justice issues are relevant to port/central city development activities and natural resource use such as fishing and swimming in area locations. The two planned outreach meetings will be organized to include a cross section of the community with special attention to vulnerable or at-risk neighborhoods proximate to proposed restoration or redevelopment sites.

☒ Project Addresses Education/Outreach

If So, Description of How:

This is a demonstration project with basinwide applications. The use of the Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN) and U.S. mailing list for the International Great Lakes St. Lawrence Mayors' Conference for hard copy distribution, as well as other port community lists (e.g., AOC's), will ensure a large and also targeted dissemination of the final report. Also, project staff will use numerous port-related conferences, as well as broader policy forums, to disseminate results (e.g., American Great Lakes Ports, SOLEC).

Project Budget:

	Federal Share Requested (\$)	Applicant's Share (\$)
Personnel:	32,000	2,425
Fringe:	11,200	850
Travel:	5,000	0
Equipment:	0	0
Supplies:	750	0
Contracts:	0	0
Construction:	0	0
Other:	7,000	0
Total Direct Costs:	55,950	3,275
Indirect Costs:	17,833	1,146
Total:	73,783	4,421
Projected Income:	0	0

Funding by Other Organizations (Names, Amounts, Description of Commitments):

No other sources of funding are currently being pursued for this project.

Description of Collaboration/Community Based Support:

Project staff will work closely with the planning departments and port staff (if available) for the two communities. Coordination with Citizen Advisory Committees for the one or two AOCs would be a high priority as would be coordination with any affiliated habitat committee. Relevant state agencies would be advised of the project and invited to contribute to the project scoping process and participate in the local workshops.